




Speech by

Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (3.50 pm): I rise today to speak on the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I would like to sincerely congratulate the Minister for Local Government on bringing this bill to the House so promptly, barely eight months since taking over the portfolio. The former Labor government made such a mess of supporting local governments that I am so pleased that the Premier and minister made it such a priority to rectify this neglect and mismanagement of our grassroots services to the community across Queensland. This will empower local councils to allow for how they want to manage these critical services that are so important to our local communities.

In my speech today I will be focusing on one of the main areas in the bill, and the minister would be well aware of my interest in short-term holiday letting in residential properties, which has had a major impact on not only my constituents but also the constituents of many of my fellow colleagues in the eastern coastal regions of Queensland. I know my colleague the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier, the member for Noosa, has found this a significant issue in his electorate and on the Sunshine Coast. Even across the border, areas such as Byron Bay are facing the same problems with these short-term accommodation businesses which circumvent local council planning acts. As a result we see untenable activity and behaviour in these houses that have received no planning authority and whose tenants have behaved in a totally abhorrent manner towards the local residents.

Short-term holiday letting in residential areas, or party houses as they are commonly known, has caused much angst and grief for many constituents living around these houses, which are let out on a short-term basis at very high commercial premiums. They are, unquestionably, short-term accommodation businesses operating in suburban residential areas, and that is how they must be thought of. They are not normal suburban rental accommodation; they are businesses. We have seen drunken buck's parties, three-day booze fests and weekend romps by out-of-control young people who have no qualms about parading around naked and drunk with music blaring in the backyards of these properties while families living next door try to get on with their daily lives. I do note that the Attorney-General has advised that this activity does not occur in the wonderful electorate of Kawana, but it may one of these days when the profitability of these party houses dawns on the good folk of Kawana. It does not take very long for people to realise that, in these difficult times of getting a return on a rental property, these businesses are making well and truly above normal rental rates and that may be the way to go for unscrupulous business operators rather than taking any notice of the suburban residential areas. The behaviour is totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated by the LNP. Premier Newman has made an absolute commitment to stamping out this party house behaviour. He has empowered the local government minister to bring on the first stage of legislation, in the bill before the House, to prevent these party houses.

The objectives of the bill are to amend the City of Brisbane Act and the Local Government Act 2009 to allow for councils to be in control of their services and workings of their business for the community. This piece of legislation before the House is a great piece of legislation because finally local governments will have the necessary powers to facilitate the essential services that the community needs at a grassroots level. The bill will ensure that state government interference is removed and kept at a minimum and at

arm's length and will only come into play when absolutely necessary. This means it unburdens local governments of unnecessary red tape and it will improve service flow, information flow and delivery flow of information to their communities.

Whilst I am on my feet, I will remind the House that the other area that will benefit local governments is the new open data revolution which will have a flow-on effect. It will assist local government and their access to government information for their communities, local businesses and community organisations. This is another initiative of the Newman LNP government in providing open access to all statistical data—raw data—of the Queensland government. Down the track we will see that even local councils will embrace this new open data revolution and will find that providing all information to their community serves them a lot better than is currently the practice in delving through realms and realms of statistical information. This is the new way for state government to interact with local governments across the state and the Premier is committed to this open and transparent information flow for all Queensland communities. The open data revolution will change the culture of how we communicate and do business and offer services to Queenslanders. Local governments can utilise this innovative and revolutionary way for all levels of government to do business.

This bill will allow for local laws to be enacted to fix the issue of party houses. It will do that by introducing laws to enable local government to utilise the appropriate statutory instruments to regulate and put in place laws to address this issue once and for all. The bill delivers on a promise the government made to the people of Queensland to crack down on party houses. Specifically, for a number of years the Gold Coast City Council has sought help from the government to regulate party houses. I have spoken to Mayor Tom Tate from the Gold Coast, who is 100 per cent behind the LNP government's initiative to restrict this activity in suburban residential areas. As soon as this legislation is enacted, they will have the ability to put in place local laws, as the minister has referred to, to regulate these party houses. Specifically, the bill gives councils the power to make a local law to fine the owner of a residential property including a tenant if excessive noise is regularly emitted from the property. The local law may fix the number of times excessive noise can be emitted from a property before the owner or tenant becomes liable. Council may then take action against owners and tenants under the terms of its own local law.

Constituents and many in the community have been continually contacting my office regarding their serious concerns about party houses. These are people from across the Gold Coast. They include people from Broadwater, particularly in the Sovereign Islands area. They have had difficulties there. The Isle of Capri has some party houses.

Mrs Stuckey: I have a couple.

Mr STEVENS: There are also a couple in the electorate of Currumbin. It is a growing phenomenon that is very much a pain in the neck for residents of these areas. This is our first step towards obliterating this activity as a legitimate exercise. They are back-dooring the planning schemes of the Gold Coast City Council. I am sure that we will move forward when the next step is taken by the Deputy Premier and Minister for Planning, who I am sure will put in place matters that will address this activity through the planning scheme as well. As the local government minister is aware, the noise element is only one part of the solution to the abolition of party houses and the Deputy Premier's planning regime will allow local governments to have the capacity to put in place appropriate planning laws which will ensure that party houses in suburban areas become a thing of the past.

I applaud our LNP government for this. I acknowledge the hard work, the great work and the sincere diligence that the Minister for Local Government and the Premier have put in to achieve this legislation before the House. I thank them very much for their efforts in this regard.